

BOWIE, MD – Today, Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-5) hosted a discussion with residents at Evergreen Senior Living Community to discuss the Republican budget, its plan to end Medicare, and the impact it will have on Maryland’s senior population. Below are his remarks as prepared for delivery:

“Last year, we enacted the Affordable Care Act. This legislation was important for seniors, because it made improvements to the Medicare program, including: seniors in the Medicare ‘donut hole’ now get discounts on brand and generic drugs, growing over time until the ‘donut hole’ is closed entirely; seniors no longer pay deductibles or co-pays for preventive care; and seniors now get a free annual wellness exam, to help prevent medical problems before they get more serious. It also made important payment and delivery system reforms that will save Medicare money, and improve both the quality and the coordination of the care you receive.

“The result of all of these changes, according to the office that runs the Medicare program, is that by the end of the decade, seniors will be paying \$200 less in annual premiums than if the Affordable Care Act were not enacted, and the Medicare program will be solvent for many more years

“At the time we passed this law, Republicans falsely attacked us for cutting Medicare benefits – even though not one single provision in the Affordable Care Act cut seniors’ benefits. That stands in sharp contrast to the Medicare policies that almost every single Republican voted for earlier this year. Their budget ends Medicare’s guarantee. It turns the program over to private insurance companies, and it pays those companies a fixed amount for each senior. Over time, that payment – kind of like a voucher – will become less and less valuable.

“Their plan will impact current and future beneficiaries. Today’s seniors will pay more for prescription drugs, pay more for preventive care, and tomorrow’s seniors will see their costs increase dramatically. Under the Republican plan, a senior who signs up for Medicare in 2022 – meaning everyone 54 or younger today – will pay over \$6000 per year more for their health care. That is more than twice as much as seniors pay today. And despite individual seniors paying significantly more for their care, our nation’s total health care spending still will not decrease. Total spending on each Medicare beneficiary would increase by 40% under the

Republican plan.

“The Republican budget also cuts over \$700 billion from the Medicaid program. Medicaid is a health care plan for our lower-income citizens – but here’s an important fact: two-thirds of every Medicaid dollar is spent on seniors and the disabled. In the Fifth District alone, Medicaid pays for the care of 64% of all nursing home residents. The Republican plan for Medicaid places both the availability and the quality of this care at risk.

“Finally, and perhaps most egregiously, this budget guts our health care programs, but gives trillions of dollars in new tax cuts to the very wealthiest Americans. Under the Republican plan, the average millionaire will get a \$200,000 tax cut under this budget, meaning that 33 seniors will pay over \$6000 more for their Medicare to finance a tax cut for one millionaire.

“I do believe that we have to do more to get our debt under control. But the solution to our debt and deficit problem must be balanced in its approach. Let’s reform the tax code to make it simpler and fairer—and let’s do it in a way that lowers tax rates and reduces the deficit. Let’s look at ways we can save on every part of our budget, defense spending included. Should we look at Medicare to see if we can find more savings there? Of course. But should we end Medicare’s guarantee? Absolutely not.”